Rann of Kutch as biosphere reserve

284. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified the little Rann of Kutch in Gujarat as biosphere reserve;

(b) if so, whether it has been notified as biosphere reserve by the Government for proper development;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when it will be notified as biosphere reserve?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Government of India have identified Little Rann of Kutch as potential site for designation as Biosphere Reserve.

(b) to (d) A project proposal for designation of Biosphere Reserve is currently under examination of the State Government of Gujarat. Notification of the site as Biosphere Reserve depends on the recommendations of the State Government.

Construction of Port in Dahanu

285. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item in "The Times of India" dated 6th October, 1997 about the move of the Maharashtra Government to construct a port in Dahanu;

(b) if so, whether Dahanu with its rich marine and forest life and flourishing non-industrial economy falls in the CRZ-I category which translates into ban on industrialisation and urbanisation of the area due to its "fragile co-operation"; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Government on the State Government's move?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The developmental activities of Dahanu Taluka are governed by the Dahanu notification dated 20-6-1991. The activities in coastal areas of Dahanu Taluka are also governed by the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification dated 19-2-1991. Some portions of this Coastal Zone are categorised as CRZ-I.

(c) As per the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, Government has constituted Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority. The mandate of this Authority is to deal with environmental issues pertaining to Dahanu Taluka including Ports.

Destruction of Trees at Tilpat Firing Range

286. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news appeared in 'The Pioneer' dated May 5, 1998 that the Indian Air Force (IAF) has bulldozed a 520-acre wooded area at Tilpat firing range near Hindon Air Force Station, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh; and

(b) if so, reaction of Government to this environmental disaster as it has destroyed more than 14 lakh trees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes Sir, the Government is aware of the news item.

(b) As intimated by the Air Force authorities, it is incorrect that the Indian Air Force had bulldozed 520 acres area at Tilpat firing range and destroyed 14 lakh trees. Tilpat firing range encompasses an area of approximately 4000 acres. Tilpat range is Air Force land and was cleared of bushes and other vegetation in view of flight safety. Generally no bush or tree is allowed to grow in a firing range area as the vegetation attracts birds of all kinds. When aircrafts are involved in firing of weapons on a firing range such as Tilpat, they have to fly down to low heights at a high speed upto 1000 km. per hour and any birds in the area can be extremely hazardous to aircraft. This firing range was being sparingly used since 1989 and due to this lot of wild bushes have grown in the area.

In 1997, it was decided to reactivate it for practising weapon firing by both helicopters and fighter aircraft.

Since the range was not in use for last many years, a large number of wild growth of kikker bushes and small trees had grown over this area and there were a number of unauthorised encroachments. With the help of civil courts and district authorities the area was cleared of encroachments in 1997. To make it fit for practising weapon firing it was cleared of wild vegetation.

US Navy ships in Indian Shipyards

287. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the fact that the United States is sending US Navy ships to the Indian ship-breaking years posing serious health hazards;

(b) if so, whether Government are aware that such an activity is not only violating Indian laws but also the Supreme Court order which bans import of hazardous waste; and

(c) if so, what action Government propose to take against the importers and the US decision to send its toxic ships to India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) As per United States national regulation, an exporter exporting ships for scrapping is required to remove components containing toxic substances from the ship and inform the importing country regarding the possible presence of remaining toxic components so that the importing country can make an informed decision. In 1996, the Government of India received a notification from the US Government for export of two ships namely "NORTHWIND" and "SANTA ISABEL" belonging to US Maritime Administration to India for scrapping. The Government of India communicated to the US Government that based on the recommendation of a study underway to assess the presence of toxic materials in general, its impact on the surrounding environment during the activity of ship-breaking and requirements of environmentally sound disposal of the pollutants generated, the requests for exports will be considered. No further notification has been received from the US Government on export of ships from the United States.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Coastal Zone Management Plan from Maharashtra

288. SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:
PROF. RAM KAPSE:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received communication bearing No. TPB-4397/1118/UD-11 dated 25th September, 1997 from Government of Maharashtra seeking some information for revising Coastal Zone Management Plan;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government on the communication;

(c) if the requisite information has not been supplied to Government of Maharashtra, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when the information will be supplied?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABULAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The information sought by the Maharashtra Government was sent to them vide MOEF letter No. J-17011/8/95-IA-III dated March 27, 1998.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Huge Public Investment in Teak Plantations

289. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI N.R. DASARI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a six-member expert committee headed by Shri P.B. Gangopadhyay has come to the conclusion that the companies starting teak plantations all over the country, on investments made by the public will not be able